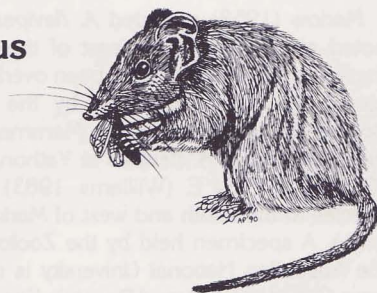


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Inland occurrences of the Yellow-footed Antechinus *Antechinus flavipes* (Waterhouse, 1838) in New South Wales

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INTRODUCTION

In August 1989 Mr D. Murray found the body of a male dasyurid on the plains adjacent to a channel on his property "Newfoundland", on the western bank of the Darling River 30°50'S, 144°45'E (Fig. 1). Not recognizing the animal, he forwarded it to the National Parks and Wildlife Service Office at Bourke where it was tentatively identified as the Yellow-footed Antechinus, *Antechinus flavipes*. There were no signs of injury to the animal so it was assumed that it had died as part of the male die-off in the antechinuses. Since the animal was so far from the range described by Van Dyck (1983), the specimen was forwarded to head office for verification and to be lodged with the Australian Museum.

Much of "Newfoundland" is cracking clay floodplain. Sandstone ridges and footslopes occupy about one tenth of the property and support mulga woodland with some scattered eucalypt and cypress pine. This latter area is similar to the known habitat of *A. flavipes*.

Antechinus flavipes is recently recorded as an animal of woodland and forest areas along the Great Dividing Range and western slopes of New South Wales, thus restricting it to the eastern half of the state. The distribution maps by Van Dyck (1983) and by Triggs (1984) broadly agree on this, although they disagree on its occurrence in coastal areas (Fig. 1). Hampton *et al.* (1982) agree with Triggs, having only recorded

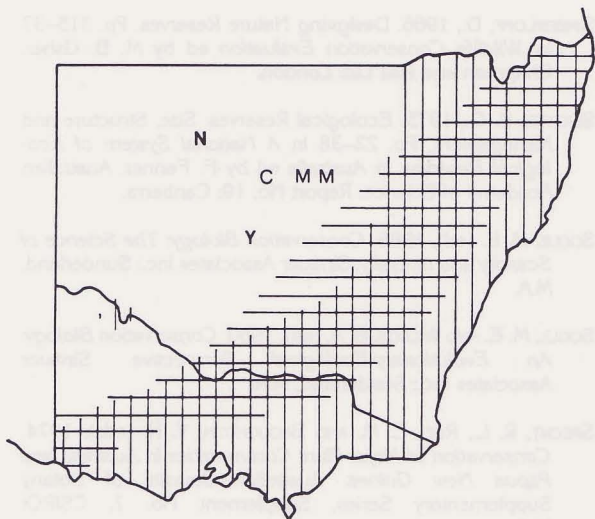


Figure 1. The distribution of the Yellow-footed Antechinus in New South Wales and Victoria; Horizontal hatching = Triggs (1984), vertical hatching = Van Dyck (1983), Y = Yathong Nature Reserve, C = Cobar, M = Marlow's (1958) specimens and N = Newfoundland.

A. flavipes from inland Victoria. Part of this disagreement on its coastal distribution may stem from *A. stuartii* formerly being included in *A. flavipes*.

Marlow (1958) recorded *A. flavipes* from Cobar and noted specimens to the east of the town (Fig. 1) but these records seem to have been overlooked in the more recent works. Survey work by the Royal Zoological Society of New South Wales Mammal Section revealed the presence of *A. flavipes* at Yathong Nature Reserve, 32°38'S, 145°34'E (Williams 1983). This placed the species to the south and west of Marlow's (1958) specimens. A specimen held by the Zoology Department of the Australian National University is recorded as being from Cobar in 1980, and Dominic Fanning (UNSW, pers. comm.) in the mid eighties trapped *A. flavipes* in the vicinity of Cobar, thus confirming the continued existence of the population.

The animal from "Newfoundland" most closely fits the description by Wood Jones (1923) for the form of *A. flavipes* from South Australia. This subspecies, *A. flavipes flavipes*, is also recorded from the Murray-Darling Junction and the western slopes. It is vividly coloured and the tail is bushier than animals shown in Van Dyck (1983). This may indicate that the South Australian, Murray River and central New South Wales animals form, or until recently formed, a continuous population. It seems from this new find and other recent records that *A. flavipes* extend almost twice as far inland in New South

Wales than recent distribution maps show and could occur across much of semi-arid New South Wales. Similarly, *Nyctophilus gouldi* has recently been discovered in the northern semi-arid region of New South Wales (Ellis *et al.* 1989) and the adequacy of faunal information for this region where few national parks and nature reserves exist must be questioned.

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Mammal Section Activities

The Mammal Section produces a newsletter ten times each year outlining talks and activities for the section members. If you are interested in receiving the newsletter please contact Murray Ellis on 585 6483.

Forthcoming meetings:

- April 24th Trevor Charles "Dingoes and Man".
(Trevor is a member of the Dingo Society of Australia).
- May 24th Geoff Ross will take a spotlighting walk through Sydney Harbour National Park (Starts at the RZS rooms).
- June 26th Cathy Atkinson "Wildlife Photography".
- July 24th Ron Strahan (title to be announced).

The meetings will be at the RZS rooms starting at 8.00 p.m. Check with Murray Ellis for any late changes to the programme.